

Imp Econ
Hand.
T.

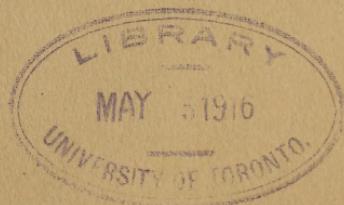
3 1761 06353870 6

HOPE FOR THE RUSSIAN PEASANTRY

BY LUCY ELIZABETH TEXTOR

III

Reprinted from THE POPULAR SCIENCE MONTHLY, December, 1916



HOPE FOR THE RUSSIAN PEASANTRY

BY LUCY ELIZABETH TEXTOR

VASSAR COLLEGE

IT was in the district of Kineshma on the Volga that I first saw that suggestively pitiful sight, thin-growing grain cut by hand. A toil-worn peasant woman, her head covered with a scarlet kerchief, her body bent, grasped the stalks in one hand and cut them with the sickle held in the other. She seemed the embodiment of that patient acceptance of a hard destiny so characteristic of the Russian peasant. It was evening, and the meager results of the day's work lay heaped up in less than half a hundred bundles lying in a line down the narrow field. The ribbon of stubble, only a few yards wide and hundreds of yards long was one of many that lay parallel and stretched almost as far as the eye could see, separated from each other by shallow ditches or rudely heaped-up earth. There were other strips of light yellow rye, of darker yellow barley, of reddish-brown buckwheat, of green hemp.

Further on lay a second set of narrow strips almost at right angles to the first. Searching the landscape I discovered that except for the low-lying meadows, patches of woods, and the village on the high bank overlooking the river, the surface of the country was divided into innumerable bands all long and very narrow, grouped together evidently according to some principle as yet unknown to me. Later I learned the meaning of these minute divisions and found its roots in the past.

Previous to 1861 the Russian peasants were serfs. Except for those who did duty as household servants, they were bound to land which belonged to their masters. Those thus bound, by far the greater number, spent a part of each week in cultivating the estates to which they belonged, and the remnant in working their own fields upon which they were dependent for bread. When these serfs were liberated each village or group of villages was given a certain amount of land in communal ownership, the price to be paid in forty-nine annual installments called redemption taxes. The community was held responsible by the state for all dues. It could cultivate the fields in common, using what was necessary of the harvest for these payments and dividing the rest among its members; or it could parcel out the fields and demand from each family a part of the total sum due the state proportionate to the value of the land allotted to the family. In the latter case the amount of land given to a family was ordinarily determined by its working strength, by the number of grown sons, for instance, able to help their father till his fields. The essential thing in the eyes of the community

was that strict justice should prevail, that the ratio between the value of the land held and the annual payment made by the family should be the same in every case. The *nadiel*, the land acquired by the community when emancipated, was, therefore, divided into units of equal value, one or more of these units being assigned to each family.

There were three principle methods of division and all of these resulted in cutting the land up into minute parcels. It may be interesting, by way of illustration, to consider in detail the method which was followed, for the most part in central Russia. The *nadiel*, leaving out of account pastures and woods which were ordinarily held in common, was first divided into three fields to provide for a rotation of two different kinds of grain and fallow. Each one of these fields was then divided with reference to quality. Areas of good black loam, of sandy, clayey and other kinds of soil were carefully delimited. Each one of these areas was then divided into a fixed number of strips equal to the number of units needed at the time by the community. Each unit contained one strip of every kind of soil in each of the three fields. The number of strips in a unit was comparatively few in lands of uniform quality and many, fifty, eighty, one hundred or even more, in lands that varied much. In any case it was certain that each unit possessed exactly the value of every other unit. Here was justice but at what a price! Land cut up into such bits that it could be tilled only with the simplest implements, endless time lost in going from one parcel to another, sameness of crops necessitated by the fact that all must sow and all must reap at the same time. More often than otherwise the only approach to a strip was across other strips. Once these had been seeded they barred the way. The absence of fences made it impossible to plant anything that would mature after the neighboring fields had been cut. The cattle having been turned into the stubble of these fields would eat the adjoining not yet ripened harvest. And what soil rendered utterly fruitless in boundary lines, the furrow used to separate the strips being sometimes one fourth as wide as the strips themselves.

For long years the Russian *mujik* was slow to grasp these disadvantages. He was used to community life. He liked doing what his neighbors did. Why not all plant rye and buckwheat? Did they not all eat black bread and *kasha*? What better than hemp and flax for the weaving of household stuffs? The fields were a long way off—yes, but it was God's will, and one must be willing to harness the horse to the *teléga* and begin the five mile journey at break of day. And when one grew hungry and thirsty there was the loaf brought along and the keg of water hung on the hooks at the back of the wagon. True the fields were sometimes so far away that it was necessary to spend nights there, but the earth was a good place upon which to sleep, the baby's crib could be suspended from two poles fastened in the ground and the mother and children could help gather the precious kernels. Such sights are

not uncommon in Russia to-day and are true to the past in nearly every detail. The Russian peasant accepts with scarcely a murmur what he believes can not be changed. He is not likely even to question circumstances if he has bread enough.

And during the period immediately following the emancipation it would seem that there was for the most part bread enough. There were hungry years even then, when the crops were poor or failed altogether, but they were taken as a matter of course. No one was held to blame. The peasants complained, it is true, at the necessity of paying for the land which they firmly believed had always been theirs, but the pressure of poverty was not yet such as to drive them to seek a remedy.

Time, however, brought changes. Sons and daughters grew up and married. Whether they remained in the home of their parents or built *izbas* for themselves land must be provided for them. How else could they live? But new units could be created only by dividing the fields anew and every parcel was thereby made smaller. Now and then, indeed, the community leased private land, but the rent was a difficult problem. Occasionally, also, alas! it was obliged to lease out some of its own land for money paid in advance and imperatively needed for the annual dues. Ordinarily this was a tract worked in common, not parcelled out into lots, but its alienation decreased none the less the food supply of the village. Thus the time came when the *nadiel* did not yield enough to support those who cultivated it. They were obliged to eke out a livelihood by earning money during the winter. Sometimes a whole village made nails, or carved wooden spoons or painted icons. Often the men sought work away from home. Some of them wandered from place to place, accepting any employment that offered itself, living most meagerly, saving every *kopec* and bringing back with them in the spring perhaps forty rubles apiece, little more than twenty dollars. Some went to the city and became cab-drivers, household servants of one kind or another, porters in railway stations. It often happened that all the men of one village who left home to earn money went to the same city and engaged in the same employment. Those whose services were not required to cultivate the land apportioned to their families frequently stayed throughout the year, sending their earnings back to help pay the dues to the state, comforting themselves in their exile with the thought that in old age they could return to the land and depend upon it for a livelihood. To return to it and share its fruits was certainly their privilege. Every *mujik* family recognizes the right of its own to come back, but the amount to be shared grew ever smaller.

As the years passed and the Russian peasantry increased in numbers by leap and bounds, doubling itself in less than half a century, its lot became constantly worse. The loaf scarcely large enough for four is scanty food for eight. Small wonder that very many of the communities were quite unable to make their annual payments to the state. Others

managed to do so only by selling their entire harvest and even their horses and cattle. The misery into which they were plunged may be easily imagined. Nearly every year in some one region or another thousands perished from slow starvation.

The government of Russia has been many times arraigned, and justly, for its apathy in the face of such conditions. Doubtless it did not wholly understand the situation. The country was vast, roads poor, and communication slow and difficult. There was, moreover, a great gulf between the world of officials and the peasants bridged over only by the *zemstva*, councils of the district and province. One circumstance, however, certainly known to the government since it touched its purse, should have prompted an investigation—the ever-increasing inability of the peasants to pay the redemption money. The government did offer some slight relief. In 1881 it lessened the taxes, particularly in the provinces whose arrears were greatest, in 1882 it established the Peasants' Bank, the chief business of which was to assist the *mujik* to buy land from those willing to sell, generally owners of large estates. The activity of this institution, however, was not great during the first thirteen years of its existence. The conditions on which the bank was permitted to lend money were such that the peasants could not for the most part profit by them. Some transference of land to peasants did take place but not enough to better the situation appreciably. The *zemstva* made laudable efforts to spread information concerning rotation of crops and enrichment of soil, but the results were merely palliative. The end of the century found matters even worse than before and in the southern part of Russia the misery and unrest among the peasants assumed a threatening aspect.

The fear of revolution is a powerful stimulus. In this case it led to the creation in 1902 of a special Council of Rural Industry to study the agrarian situation in its various aspects. Some members of this council were placed in every district of every province and there joining to themselves representatives of the gentry and the peasants of the district inquired carefully into conditions in the immediate vicinity. This investigation resulted in a mass of valuable data and some recommendations, which, be it said, those highest in authority did not wholly relish and which were not adopted. Then in 1904 came the Russo-Japanese war, which distracted the attention of the government from home difficulties while it increased the misery of the people and their ire against the state. The result was great and wide-spread peasant disturbances. Private estates were laid waste and the rioters made ready to seize the soil which they firmly believed to be their own. It was imperative that something be done at once.

In these circumstances it is not at all strange that the government should have read the situation as most people in Russia read it. The

peasants saw no remedy for their plight but more acres, and the various political parties differed chiefly as to ways and means of providing them with this desideratum. The first *Duma* had advocated the forced expropriation of all crown, church and private lands, and its steadfast adherence to this demand had brought about its dissolution. But while the government disapproved of this method of supplying the need of the peasants, it felt the need to be a real one. It therefore increased the powers and privileges of the Peasants' Bank so that through its medium the poor could add to their holdings on surprisingly easy terms. Appanage lands were offered for sale. Large areas of private estates whose owners had suffered in 1905 and who feared further disturbances were placed on the market. During the five years from 1905 to 1910 inclusive, more than 14,000,000 acres were sold to the people through the agency of the bank. These figures sound large. They are, however, relatively small. Moreover, it must be remembered that in those very districts where the cry for land was loudest there was in the nature of the case least to be had.

Meanwhile, however, the government attacked the agrarian problem from another side. The *ukase* of November, 1906, was meant to induce the peasants to change from communal to private ownership. This had been their privilege on certain conditions according to the laws governing the emancipation but in 1893 the privilege had been made subject to the consent of the *mir*, the village community, because at that time the government did not wish the strength of the *mir* to be impaired. The *ukase* restored the privilege, but whereas in the past the peasant had seldom been able to avail himself of it because he had not the money to buy out his land from the community now he had no need of money since the government cancelled all arrears and all redemption installments payable in the future. Any member of a *mir* could step out whether the *mir* were willing or not, receiving his due amount of land in private ownership. How much the individual received depended upon circumstances. If he had held the same parcels for twenty-four years, in other words, if there had been no redistribution of the *nadiel* during that time, he received these parcels or their equivalent, the assumption being that in that particular community the principle of parcelling out the land was dead. If on the contrary there had been a redistribution of land within the last twenty-four years, the assumption was that this principle was still operative. In that case the withdrawing peasant could claim only as much land as would be allotted him if a redistribution were made at the moment of his withdrawal. He must be allowed, however, to purchase the difference between what he actually held and what he would receive in the event of a revision.

This law definitely announced the break-up of the *mir*, it looked toward the end of community ownership. It had, in all probability, as

its immediate object the formation of a class of small proprietors who would be loyal to the state, moved by gratitude for the property rights granted them and the desire to retain those rights. Even small property owners are in general on the side of law and order and against that anarchy which destroys real wealth. Doubtless, also, the government felt that so long as the peasants held land in community ownership they would act as communities in other matters; and when it came to an expression of grievances it could more easily deal with individuals than groups.

It may be questioned whether the mere transition from communal to private ownership held in itself any salvation for the starving peasantry. If the land remained split up into tiny parcels, it was a matter of little moment whether the title lay with a group or with an individual. About 18 per cent. of the *mujiks* already owned their land in perpetuity. Exact statistics dealing with the subject are lacking, but it would seem that these were for the most part no more prosperous than their communistic neighbors. Some of them had so little land that they were of necessity very poor. Having been offered in 1861 their choice between a certain number of *desiatines* at a fixed price and one fourth of this amount as a gift they had chosen the latter alternative. Others had bought their shares from the community but received them for the most part in such small parcels that they could not be worked to advantage. Private ownership, therefore, where known, did not always wear an alluring garb. In many places it was wholly unknown. Communal ownership, on the other hand, was an old institution, generally prevalent and deeply ingrained in the people. They saw in it safety for themselves and for their posterity. So long as the village continued to own the soil there was a bit for every man and for his sons and grandsons.

In the light of these considerations it is not strange that the great bulk of peasants were not inclined to take advantage of the new law. There were, however, two classes to whom it appealed. One was captured by the clause which provided that the family whose holding was larger than it would be, were a redistribution made now, might buy, at the price attached to this land in 1861, the difference between what it held and what it would receive in the event of a redistribution. Land having trebled in value during the last half century, such a family would of course profit greatly by a purchase on these terms. The other class was made up of those peasants who held parcels of land as members of a community but who had taken up their abode in some city or industrial center. Such were glad to receive their parcels in private ownership because they could then sell them. Aside from these two classes, there were of course some *mujiks* who seized this opportunity of getting compact farms, which, being their own, they could work as they pleased in

a scientific way. These were comparatively few in number. It must be confessed, then, that the *ukase* of November, 1906, did not in itself provide a salvation for the economic difficulties of the people.

A solution was, however, bound up in a way with the working out of the law. Its execution lay with the provincial and district commissions created in 1906 primarily to assist the Peasants' Bank in smoothing the way for those who wished to purchase land. Now the bank had been definitely instructed to sell its land as far as possible in well-rounded pieces which in the hands of individual owners might serve as models to the neighboring communities. The commissions were therefore, while assisting the bank, engaged in the creation of compact farms. Their other activities were along this same line. They were instructed by the government to do everything in their power to persuade the peasants to give up irrational methods of cultivation, particularly the division of the fields into minute parcels.

The *ukase* of 1906 gave these commissions a great opportunity. The law did not state that every peasant who wished to withdraw from the community and receive his share of land in perpetuity must be given that land in a single piece but it permitted and even encouraged this procedure and it was quite natural that the commissions should have striven toward this end in the surveys which they were called upon to make. During the five years from 1907 to 1911 inclusive 503,408 families withdrawing from the community received their land, through the agency of the government surveys, in compact units. This was certainly not a large number, considering the population of Russia—but it was a decided step in the direction of agricultural progress.

The *ukase* of November, 1906, then, although primarily political in its spirit and purpose, resulted in a certain limited economic good. From the very beginning there were some who defended this effort to transform community into private property on the ground that it paved the way for scientific farming. Gradually the emphasis shifted from the question of tenure to the question of husbandry. It was plain to those who studied the subject that the diminution of crops in Russia was due to obsolete and wasteful methods of cultivating the soil. There were whole areas that were exhausted, there were fields that lay so far away from the village that owned them that they could not be tilled, the weed-grown furrows which served as boundary lines between the parcels aggregated a vast territory lost to cultivation. The essential thing was to map out the land anew so that it could be worked in larger tracts and with better methods.

It might have been possible, as some contend, to legislate toward this end without disturbing the *mir*. The separate parcels could have been consolidated into large areas and still have remained communal property. This was done by some villages in central Russia during the

last decade. They cultivated these large tracts to advantage, using improved machinery. There is, however, much to be said on the side of those who insist that technical advance in agriculture can be furthered best in connection with private property. This is the assumption on which the law of June 1911 rests. There is in this law definite evidence of the change of emphasis in the land policy of Russia. The government still wishes to encourage the transformation of communal property into private property, but it brings less pressure to bear in this direction. On the other hand, it lays tremendous stress upon uniting the various parcels of land belonging to one owner, whether that owner be an individual or a community. The law makes the most elaborate provision for the settlement of every imaginable difficulty arising from the lack of clear demarcation of boundary lines and the confusion of tenures. There are areas in Russia which wear the aspect of a veritable puzzle—fields of different villages intermingled, church, state and private property enclosed in one piece of communal property, holdings partly communal and partly private and so on almost without end. Out of this chaos the government proposes to bring order—but only upon request. When a family, or a number of families, or a village, or a group of villages forming a community, desire to have their land surveyed and rearranged, they appeal to the district commission whose members represent the central government, the local government and the peasants themselves. This commission appoints one of its number, or a surveyor, to examine the locality in question and to confer with the petitioners as to their wishes. The entire matter having been explained to it, the commission decides whether the project is in harmony with the principles laid down by law to govern all the new land arrangements, and, according to its decision, either refers the project back to the peasants for changes, or orders that it be worked out in detail. When this has been done, those whose lands are concerned are requested to pass upon the plan in its final form. It is their privilege to accept or reject it, but every effort is made by the members of the district commission to overcome objections by persuasion or by practicable modifications. When accepted the plan is sent to the commission of the province. Upon the approval of this commission the work is put under way as soon as surveyors can be spared for it.

The character of the work done by these surveyors depends upon circumstances. A few illustrations will serve to make it clear. When the peasants were emancipated it often happened that a group of villages, being the property of one and the same lord, received their *nadiel* as one community. This land was not a single piece but was made up of many irregular pieces. Certain ones belonged to each village, had been cultivated by it in the days of serfdom. These were rarely continuous and were mixed with the pieces belonging to the other villages of the

group. Furthermore the *nadiel* often enclosed in its boundaries lands owned by the state, the church or private individuals. Suppose these villages request what is known in German as *Verkoppelung und Auseinandersetzung*—consolidation by means of exchange of land belonging to each village. It then becomes the task of the government surveyor to measure off the land belonging to the entire community and to give to each village in one piece, if possible, the equivalent of the many parcels belonging to it heretofore. The difficulties of such a task are apparent at first sight. The quality of soil may be anything from very good to very bad. It is necessary to fix a standard and then determine the value of each particular quality with reference to that standard. If the best soil is taken as the standard then it will require let us say $1\frac{1}{2}$ *dessiatines* to equal one *dessiatine* of the best, $1\frac{1}{2}$ *dessiatines* of the next poorest to equal the best and so on down to the worst. The problem attaching itself to the division of the arable land among the villages being solved, there remain the questions of the meadows, the pastures and the woods. Each village will wish to have some grazing ground in its immediate vicinity even though its arable land should be far away. The group of villages may desire to continue to hold the meadows and woods in common. This arrangement was often made in the surveys of several years ago, but the government now distinctly discourages it. When the private lands strewn among the parcels of the community hinders the giving of a compact area to each village, then efforts are made to buy the offending pieces or to exchange them for outlying portions of the community land.

It must be understood that each village, being now provided with the equivalent in one tract of its many parcels, is still at liberty to regard the tract as communal property. It is under no obligation to divide it into individual holdings. But any family in the village may demand that its just share be given it in perpetuity, in which case the matter is either amicably arranged in the village, or is settled by government authorities. It frequently happens that a number of families, alert, ambitious and enterprising, make this request and transport their little homes from the village to their new farms which are then known as *houtors*. Curious it is to see, but not at all uncommon in Russia, four such families whose lands form approximately the four quarters of a square, building their *izbas* in the angles that meet at the center so that a few steps will cover the distance from the door of one house to the next. Even these pioneers dread living alone. The *mujiks* are gregarious. The opportunity for companionship is a prime requisite with them. And, indeed, quite aside from the matter of temperament, a family might well wish to avoid complete isolation during the long weeks when the melting of the snow and the spring rains render the roads impassable.

The government may be called upon to survey the *nadiel* of a single very large village. Take Borma as an example. It owned 6,250 *dessaines* or approximately 16,625 acres cut up, so that each household tilled eighteen widely scattered parcels. The pasturage was divided anew each year and the ravines were held in common. One hundred and ninety-one families desired to have their holdings given them in private ownership, the rest wished to retain theirs in communal ownership. It was decided to divide the *nadiel*, so that the northern part might be given to those who wished to withdraw from the *mir*. Of the latter class ninety-nine families settled upon the tracts assigned them, ninety-two settled in eight groups upon sites purposely chosen at some distance from each other for villages. This arrangement was made for the benefit of those who felt it necessary for the sake of social intercourse to live in the near vicinity of neighbors yet who wished also to be relatively near their fields. Farms whose owners live in the village are known as *otroubs*. This arrangement is at present very common in Russia. Often it is doubtless an intermediate stage. In the course of time many families living in villages will move to their farms, provided they are able to find good drinking water there or in the near vicinity. The *mujik* does not mind carting his water in barrels over long distances but there is a limit to the time he can spend in this occupation. A single well frequently serves an entire village.

Here is another example of the kind of task the government may be called upon to perform. A village that has worked its *nadiel* in common since the time of the emancipation or that, while holding it in common, has parcelled it out periodically among its families, decides at a meeting of the adult men to go over to private ownership. The proper request is laid before the district commission and the surveys begin. The first question has to do with the roads. In central Russia particularly the old ones are meandering and very broad. Why take the trouble to fill in wagon ruts that have become hopelessly deep when it is possible to drive alongside of them? And when new ruts have been formed these, too, can be left to care for themselves. Thus the old roads lost whatever straightness they may originally have had and stretched to a great width. New ones must be carefully laid out. Next comes the question of water. It is the ideal of the government to persuade each family to live on the tract allotted it and with this end in view the commission frequently offers to assist the *mujik* with the money necessary to transport his old dwelling or to put up a new one, the sum to be paid back in fifteen years without interest, although occasionally in extraordinary circumstances it is an outright gift. Often, however, the absence of water or the expense involved in sinking deep wells makes it necessary for the peasants to live in groups. In this case sites must be selected for these so-called daughter-villages. Then comes

the differentiation of the different qualities of land. After that the tracts are laid out, each one as nearly as possible approaching a square, some perhaps entirely of plough land, some combining plough land with pasture and woods. The peasants who are to receive tracts of exactly equal value often draw lots for them. The assignment of other tracts is ordinarily made by mutual agreement.

It is difficult to comprehend what a vast amount of labor is involved in these surveys. In the single year of 1912 nearly 9,000,000 acres passed under the measuring-chain. More than five thousand surveyors are employed and paid by the government. The commissioners in charge of the so-called new land arrangements number seven thousand.

Well laid-out tracts of land are not, however, an end in themselves. They are simply the requisite for scientific farming that will yield the largest returns. The peasants of Russia must be taught how to manage their soil to the best advantage. This instruction is being given them. Agricultural experts have been stationed throughout the country to teach the *mujiks* by counsel and example how to dress and till their fields, what crop to plant. The number of these experts in the employment of both the government and the *zemstra* increased from 2,541 in 1909 to 5,185 in 1911. Many model farms and testing-fields have been established to make plainly evident the concrete results of better agricultural methods. The experimental stations increased from seventy in 1907 to two hundred and ten in 1911. I can speak from personal observation of one in the province of Samara. It is in charge of a gentleman who studied agronomy for two years in the United States and is excellently managed. Much should be said in praise of the work done by the *zemstra*. That at Kineshma is engaged in a great variety of admirable activities all looking toward the welfare of the peasant. I need only mention as à propos of agricultural progress the placing of stallions where they will help toward breeding finer horses and the furnishing at little more than cost price of excellent seed and farm machinery of every kind practicable and desirable in that part of Russia. Many other *zemstra* are engaged in the same work. Indeed these district and provincial councils were the first to conceive the idea of teaching the peasants how to improve their methods of cultivating the soil. That was twenty years ago, more or less; now the government is co-operating with them and added stimulus and strength have brought corresponding results.

The new land policy of Russia is scarcely known to the world at large. Considering its magnitude and importance very little in the way of a careful exposition of it has been written. Yet it has to do with more than 100,000,000 people and with an area almost equal to the rest of Europe. It endeavors to change in a decade or two the habits, customs, ideas and ideals of centuries. While the reforms of Peter the Great were limited almost entirely to the upper classes, this concerns

itself with the masses. It seeks to lift them from poverty into comparative well-being. It is theirs to seize the opportunities offered them. As they do so they will enter upon a new life.

There are those in Russia who point to the many mistakes made by officials and surveyors in the execution of this land reform. It is true that in the beginning the work was pushed so rapidly that it was not always well done. There was a dearth of good surveyors and the government was often obliged to make use of those inadequately prepared. Roads were not always well placed, possibilities of obtaining good drinking water were not everywhere thoroughly investigated and peasants withdrawing from the *mir* were allowed to retain meadow and pasture land in common. The mistakes of the first years are certainly to be deplored, but it must be recognized that they were almost inevitable in so vast an enterprise. Now, however, the various district and provincial commissions have profited by their experiences and are directing operations more wisely. Certainly there is in the higher commission to which they are responsible one man fitted in every possible way to inspire and direct the great undertaking. I refer to Mr. A. A. Koefoed. He was connected for many years with the Peasants' Bank. He traveled widely in Russia studying at first hand the question of land tenure and the prevalent methods of cultivation and has become the most eminent authority on this subject. Moreover, he understands the *mujiks* and knows how to meet them and is heartily desirous of furthering their best interests.

Again there are those who say that this policy of the government will bring only temporary well-being. In less than a century the peasantry will be as badly off as ever. The family provided with land enough to yield it a livelihood now will divide this land among its children and so rapidly do the *mujiks* increase in numbers that it will not be long before their farms will be so small as to throw them back into indigence. This assumes that the children of all those now tilling the soil will also till the soil, a supposition which is scarcely tenable considering the ever-increasing demand for laborers in industry. It would be well, however, to take some precautionary measures against the contingency of redividing the land into small parcels. Denmark has enacted an inheritance law which fixes a minimum size for farms. If Russia were to do the same no peasant could divide his freehold between two heirs unless it were at least twice the size of the minimum. The farm incapable of division could be left to one of the children, this one to make good the shares of the others by money payments, a practise which prevails in Norway and in certain parts of Germany. There is, however, very little occasion to fear that the sizable freeholds of to-day will in the future be divided into minute parcels. Rather it may be confidently expected that the number of small freeholds will steadily de-

crease. Many peasants have been obliged to mortgage the land which they had in order to purchase more. Some of these will find themselves unable to meet their obligations and will sell or lose that land. This may happen as the result of incompetence, inexperience in the management of private property, poor harvests or other calamities. On the other hand those peasants who are shrewd, thrifty, hardworking, fortunate, will prosper and will add to their *dessiatines*. The march of time, then, bids fair to divide the rural population of Russia into two classes, the one landless, dependent upon wages for a livelihood, the other made up of small, well-to-do landowners.

This probability, not to say certainty, has raised other voices against the new land policy. These maintain that the increase of a landless class, a proletariat, is always a bad thing. It is not proposed to discuss here the general question of the right of each man to a bit of soil large enough to yield him a livelihood. It need only be pointed out that this ideal can not be realized in Russia. Even if every *dessiatine* in that vast country were given to the peasants, in much less than a century the holdings would again be too small. Poverty would once more reign over the people. On the other hand it is possible for the proletariat to be self-respecting, intelligent and prosperous. The opportunity for wage-work is not lacking in Russia. There is to-day a demand for laborers on the large estates which can not be satisfied. Great losses are annually sustained by them because there are not hands to gather in the harvest at the proper time. Factories, too, suffer from the lack of operatives who will keep at their tasks the year around. They are too often dependent upon those who leave their farms in the fall to return to them again in the spring. This demand is steadily growing since manufacturing is greatly on the increase.

Certainly the augmentation of the proletariat is not an unmixed good either for those who constitute the class or for society at large. Work is not always to be had for the asking and returns are often inadequate and uncertain. Then, too, there are the dangers inherent in leaving an environment that has exercised a restraint and set up standards and entering another in which one has at first no fixed place and no social responsibility. In time, however, the new environment will become an old one with a conscience and with rulings of its own. Moreover in the long run much good may be expected from separating the individual from the community and obliging him to stand alone. Unsupported by the props to which he is accustomed he will stumble, he may fall, but when he rises it will be with a new strength all his own.

And what of the other class whose numbers whether through superior intelligence or industry, fortunate circumstances or a combination of all these are able to add substantially to their lands. Certainly it has not yet come into existence as a body conscious of its solidarity,

able as a whole to work definitely toward chosen ends. Time and experience and education are necessary for that. But individual well-to-do *mujik* families grow steadily more numerous. I remember in particular one such in the province of Samara. Its past, its present, its future were, so to speak, plainly in view. I drove up the hillside through fields of golden grain, past the tiny orchard not yet old enough to bear fruit, to the brand-new home, each one of the four good-sized rooms fully furnished and so orderly and immaculate as to show conclusively that they were not being used. Scarcely ten feet back stood an old *izba* bearing every evidence that the family lived its life there. The back part of the stove and a low platform served as beds. Sheep-skin coats and long felt boots lay heaped in one corner. Hens walked placidly in and out of the door and the horses and cattle were stabled only a few feet away. Our host displayed his possessions with the greatest pride and pointing significantly to a field adjoining his own said, "It will soon be mine. I am buying it." It is probable that this man will not be content to have his children attend only the parish school. Some one of them may be sent away if only to study how better to till the soil and make it yield larger profits. Here is the new agricultural Russia from which great things may be hoped. These well-to-do farmers, sobered by the possession of property, no longer obliged to labor for bread to the exclusion of everything else, able to educate their children, will rapidly rise to the position of a powerful middle class to whose united voice even autocracy will listen. If this class is able to preserve the remembrance of its kinship with the poor, if it deals as justly with all strata of society as the communes from which it has sprung sought to deal in the distribution of their land the future of Russia is assured.

